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ABSTRACT

Parents, community members, and representatives from local businesses possess a wealth of energy, knowledge, and creativity that is not being used in high schools. In this study parents of 1,234 students (representing 1,051 families) in a California high school were asked to respond to a survey measuring parental involvement in education at the secondary level. Responding parents (N=145) rated their feelings about the school, their involvement at home with their child's schooling, the school-to-home communication systems, and compared the average number of minutes they spend helping the student on homework compared to the number that they could spend. The responding parents felt welcome at the surveyed school and spent significant time talking with their children about their school work. Some parents wanted information on all subjects that their children study in school; 50% wanted more information on how to help their children in math. Most parents were involved in talking to the child about school work and assigning chores to do for the family. Most parents responded that they could spend more time with their child doing homework but claimed students had passed the parent's ability to help them in many subject areas and high school is a time for students to learn independence from the parents. Parents in the school's community generally supported the school as a place that cares about their children. The survey form is appended. (Contains 22 references.) (ABL)

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BUILDING BRIDGES FROM SCHOOL TO HOME:

GETTING PARENTS INVOLVED IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

BY

JULIANNE SCHRICK

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the Dominican College Department of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Education: Curriculum and Instruction

San Rafael, California
May, 1992

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Abstract

Parents in a California high school were asked to respond to a survey measuring parental involvement in education at the secondary level. Parents rated their feelings about the school, their involvement at home with their child's schooling, the school-to-home communication systems, and compared the average number of minutes they spend helping the student on homework compared to the number that they could spend. The responding parents felt welcome at the surveyed school and spent significant time talking with their children about their school work.

Table of Contents

Introduction	5
Statement of the Problem	5
Rationale	6
Background and Need	8
Review of the Relevant Literature	11
School personnel practices	11
Parent issues and practices	14
Legislation	19
Community	20
Summary of Literature Review Findings	25
Statement of the Purpose	26
Method	26
Parent Attitudes about Parent Involvement	28
What Subjects do Families Want to Know More About?	29
How are Parents Most Involved with their Children?	30
How Much Does the School Involve Parents Now?	32
Student Characteristics and Homework Time	34
Discussion and Implications	36
References	39
Appendix	42

Building Bridges from School to Home: Getting Parents Involved in Secondary Education

Introduction

Teachers in the state of California are rethinking the way they teach and the atmosphere in which they teach. The restructuring movement has been encouraged by the promise of fiscal support from both government and private industry. Each year the number of students in classes increases, as does the possible number of contact hours that teachers could spend with students in preparation and remediation. Many teachers are not doing the type of teaching they know to be effective because they are unable to personalize education for their students. There are too many students and there is too much material to cover to make sustained personal contact with the individuals on a regular basis.

Statement of the Problem

Missing on the secondary campus is an organized cadre of parent volunteers who work in classrooms, libraries, and labs. Parents, community members, and representatives from local businesses possess a wealth of energy, knowledge, and creativity that is not being used in high schools. Will students value their schooling more if their parents and community members take an

active interest in their education and help make it more authentic? How can the classroom teacher and school support system utilize these parental and business community resources?

Rationale

Currently, most teachers activate students' prior knowledge and ask them to reproduce that which is already known, rather than putting the emphasis on using prior knowledge to produce new knowledge. Many students are unable to see connections between disciplines or relevance to their future or career. In order to bring the student along the journey to adult competence, teachers need to bring more authentic expressions of knowledge into schools. Students need to engage in activities that are worthwhile, significant, and meaningful. Authentic education requires students to participate in disciplined inquiry to produce knowledge that has value in their lives beyond proving competence in school. Our parents and community members are a ready-made resource for bringing a reality-based curriculum into secondary education, and the numbers of people that would be required to insure that every child in the system receive an authentic education.

Grants paying up to $250,000 for four consecutive

years are available to restructure schools in the state of California. In order to receive one of these restructuring grants, school sites must develop a plan to integrate departments and curriculum, make education more reality-based, change the idea of school campus/school day, and bring the outside world into the lives of students. For many of today's students, there is no connection between school and the real world. Their vocabulary choice describing that which occurs outside of school implies that school is not of the real world.

The report Caught in the Middle (1987) emphasizes that school change cannot be considered without parents and community being the cornerstone of the reform:

> Community support...of educational reform efforts are direct functions of parent support for their schools. Parents shape educational policy either through their involvement or noninvolvement in school affairs. An educational philosophy that embraces parental concerns about their young adolescent children will do much to diminish the present distance between classroom and home and ultimately enable educators to achieve significant professional goals.

In order to successfully implement sustained reform,

parental and professional priorities must be considered in cooperation and collaboration with the schools' planned reorganization. Business and industry may be more inclined to financially support changes when parent and community groups work to support the school reorganization.

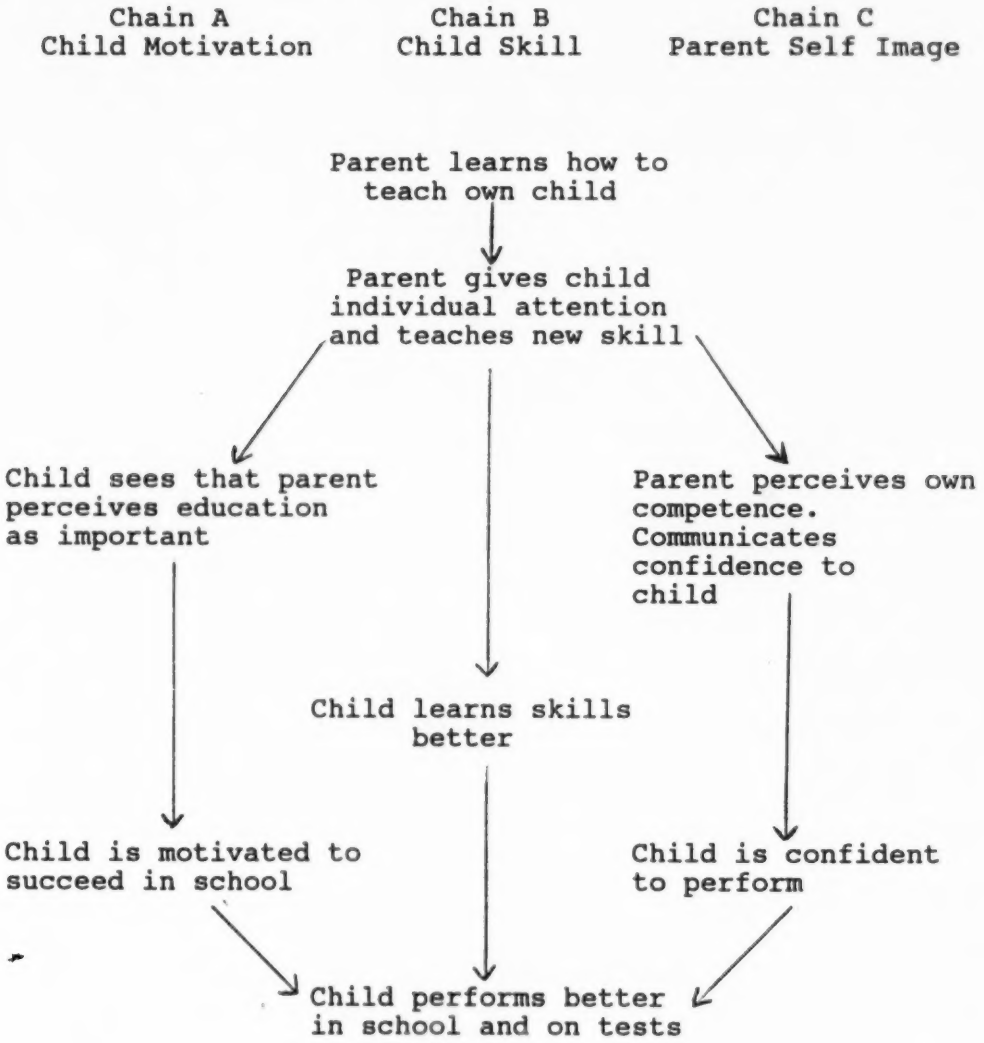
Background and Need

Anne Henderson (1987) of the National Committee for Citizens in Education has emerged as an expert in the field of partnerships between parents and schools. She emphatically states that parent involvement in almost any form improves student achievement.

Henderson reviewed 18 major and minor studies that researched all aspects of parental involvement, from Head Start programs for pre-schoolers to cognitive growth and personal achievement for students at all grade levels. Henderson includes a summary of the studies reviewed for the paper and conclusively states that the involvement of parents does translate into improved student achievement. In the synthesis of the research of the various studies, it is stated that achievement improves significantly if the parental involvement is comprehensive and sustained.

Henderson cites an excellent diagram of how parent involvement translates into a process of motivation for

the student. The diagram is three-pronged:


Chain A
Child Motivation
Chain B
Child Skill
Chain C
Parent Self Image
Parent learns how to teach own child
Parent gives child individual attention and teaches new skill
Child sees that parent perceives education as important
Parent perceives own competence. Communicates confidence to child
Child learns skills better
Child is motivated to succeed in school
Child is confident to perform
Child performs better in school and on tests

The diagram underlines the importance of the parents' role in the child's perception of education and the positive results of their involvement.

Some of the studies synthesized in the Henderson paper are more applicable to secondary schooling than others. The following is a synopsis of the summarized studies that are relevant to the questions raised in this paper:

1) Children whose parents spend time in either cultural activities or organized activities do better than those who do not;

2) Three participating districts all showed significant improvement in reading scores due to homework contracts; the district with the most comprehensive program of parental participation had the greatest gains in scores;

3) The more sustained and encompassing the parent involvement, the more effective it is relative to both the child's achievement and the quality of the school itself;

4) A significant relationship exists between parental involvement and student achievement, as well as parental involvement and quality of the school. The parent perception of influence in decision making and parent-teacher relationships contributes to the amount of

parent participation and in turn, positively effects student achievement;

5) Out of five categories of school-community relations, communication is the most important as it relates to student achievement and the process of community communication;

6) The critical factor in the achievement and aspirations of high school students is the degree of parental and community interest in quality education;

7) Schools with high levels of student achievement are more open to parent and community involvement.

Henderson's work synthesizes many studies. One can conclude that involved parents have positive effects on both their own children's achievement and the overall level of achievement in the school. It is speculated that schools with open systems and inviting, supportive environments are more effective than schools that spring from a power base and are closed to outside influences.

Review of the Relevant Literature

School personnel practices.

In the study conducted by Becker and Epstein (1982), 3,698 teachers responded to a survey that focused on 14 specific techniques that teachers employ to use parents. The study was conducted in 16 of 24 school districts in

Maryland, with teachers from 600 schools responding. Ninety percent were female and ten percent were male. Seventy percent of the males taught fifth grade; their socio-economic and ethnic makeup reflected a cross-section of the state's population. The largest trend noted was that teachers who actively employ parent involvement strategies had an equally likely expectation of parents from high, middle, and low income families to help, while those who did not employ these strategies expected that populations would respond according to their income (stereotypical response related to income). The other result noted was personal contact was vital in developing a commitment from parents.

Walde and Baker (1990) found that the issue was not involvement vs. noninvolvement, but the quality of the involvement. Included in this work are three unstated assumptions that teachers have for parents: 1) parents are concerned; 2) parents want to be involved; 3) parents have necessary skills. Many teachers feel that parents possess these qualities, but they have more pressing needs to which they have to attend. This is an anecdotal article, and does not include the numbers nor the breakdown of the teachers interviewed.

Epstein and Dauber (1991) conducted a study on

school programs and teacher practices of parent involvement in inner-city schools. They used data from 171 teachers from 8 elementary and middle schools. The schools were selected at random from a set of comparable Chapter 1 schools in economically and educationally disadvantaged neighborhoods. A teacher questionnaire that obtained over 100 pieces of information was analyzed in two ways: first, descriptive statistics summarized the strengths and weaknesses of the school based on Epstein's own model of parent involvement. (1987; found in January 1991 Phi Delta Kappan). This information was used to help the schools develop their initial projects to improve parent involvement programs; second, the data was formally analyzed for patterns and connections of teacher attitudes about parent involvement, school programs, and the actual practices teachers use in the two levels of schooling in three different settings. Results indicate that individually, teachers express strong positive attitudes toward parent involvement, but most school programs and classroom practices do not support these beliefs. Included in this work are suggestions on how to develop a program inclusive of parents, changing attitudes and practices of parents and teachers, and the statistical analysis of the

actual study.

Greenwood and Hickman (1991) suggest 10 recommendations for teacher education in order for teachers to better take advantage of the relationship between parent involvement and student achievement. Teacher education programs need to prepare new teachers in the following areas: barriers to parental involvement, overcoming the barriers, the teacher's role in parental involvement, and the five types of parent involvement previously identified by Epstein (1987, found in January 1991 Phi Delta Kappan). In a synthesis of the research on the parent involvement issue, the authors found that teacher beliefs in personal teaching ability was the strongest predictor of parent involvement. This was even a better predictor than socioeconomic status; both high teacher efficacy and parent efficacy were the essential ingredients for a successful program.

Parent issues and practices.

Cochran and Dean (1991) studied home-school relations and the empowerment process. School administrators, teachers, and other educational leaders are in a position to facilitate and promote interactions between home and school. Currently, most communication is one-way, coming from school to home. Parents lack an

advocate on campus; no one emphasizes their needs or interests as policies evolve. The recommendation is that changes in attitudes toward parents need to happen concurrently in two areas: personal interactions and policy changes. In order to enable a school to begin to make changes in these areas, the authors include questions to ask to focus on the parent participation issue.

Another study addressing parent involvement programs and how one successfully begins to implement was initiated by Comer and Haynes (1991). This article focuses on the change process and how a parent participation program was developed when the Yale Child Study Center entered into partnership with elementary schools in New Haven, CT. During a period of three to five years, a three-pronged model evolved. The three elements of the program are the governance mechanism, involving parents, teachers, administrators, and professional support staff, the mental health mechanism, and the parent program mechanism. This parent program has been designed to enable parents and staff to aid in the social development of students and to motivate them to succeed academically and personally. The authors include a checklist of crucial points when seeking parent

involvement in the schools. A definitive statement regarding the linkage provided between home, school, and community when a successful and comprehensive parental involvement program is in place summarizes the authors' findings.

Chavkin and Williams (1990) focus on the attitudes and practices of working parents and their children's education. They identify three types of families: traditional working families (family works for wages outside of the home and mother is not employed), single-parent working families (one parent with custody who is divorced, widowed, or never-married and working full-time for wages outside of the home), and dual-parent working families. The respondents to the survey numbered 1,924, with 834 traditional, 355 single-parent, and 735 dual-parent families. The survey was distributed at large open-house meetings across a six-state region sponsored by PTAs. The survey used was the Parent Involvement Questionnaire (PIQ); it had 100 closed-response questions at a sixth grade readability level. Translators were available for non-English speaking families. This study did not take into account education, income level, community size, age, gender, and ethnicity. The findings indicate that most parents wish to be involved in their

child's education; despite scheduling conflicts, 85% of the single-parent and dual-working parent families would like to be involved in school activity programs. It is suggested that these parents would be more likely to be involved if their roles could be performed on a flexible timetable. A possible bias this survey could show is that parents who attend open houses are already involved in some type of school activity and any increased support that these parents could give schools would be more likely to come from people who attend open house than those who do not.

In an article synthesizing research on parent participation in children's education, Moles (1982) states that possible barriers to the home-school collaboration issue emerge from competing home responsibilities, fear for safety at evening events, parental work schedules, parents feeling overwhelmed by student problems, parents receiving only bad news from school communications, and a parental lack of educational values. Moles advocates a program out of Chicago named Parents Plus; this program has parents come into school one day a week to learn how to better assist the student at home or to participate in a "make-it, take-it" type workshop.

In an effort to improve parent involvement and overcome the possible problems that parents may face, D'Angelo and Adler (1991) review Chapter 1 programs and their model for successful parental involvement. The Hawkins Stafford School Improvement Amendment of 1988 reaffirmed the Chapter 1 parent involvement requirement. The new regulations require programs to assess their effectiveness in increasing parental involvement. They identify three types of communication techniques that schools use with parents: face-to-face, technological, and written. This survey looks at programs in Ohio, Texas, and Mississippi and identifies those factors that led to improved parental involvement.

Warner (1991), highlighting the Parents in Touch program in Indianapolis, identifies the goal of this program as facilitating two-way communication. Parents can stay in touch and become partners with the schools. Programs that are successfully in place at the elementary, middle, and high school levels include the Dial-A-Teacher hotline, the Homework Hotline, the Parent Line Communicator, the Parent Focus series, and work site seminars. Details of these specific programs and their usage, as well as the home and school folder/contract system are outlined.

Legislation.

Nardine and Morris (1991) raise the question of how firm the commitment of parents is in the United States. This work summarizes two studies. Parental involvement in special education programs is widespread, but it is difficult to draw a national picture of parental involvement in non-special education programs. One study the authors review tried to identify the nature and extent of the commitment of parental involvement. The authors conclude that data collection was difficult; those responding to the survey were state officials who had a program in place, and those states whose superintendents did not respond had no significant programs for parental involvement. The other study assessed the state of legislation in regards to parental involvement. Of the 50 states contacted, 47 responded. Twenty states have some type of parental involvement legislation in place and twenty-one have no type of parental involvement at all. A few states were mentioned specifically regarding the types of programs they have. It would be more informative to refer back to the original studies rather than this synopsis.

Regarding specific state policy, Solomon (1991) reviews California's policy on parent involvement.

Solomon makes the point that state leadership enables schools to understand and implement practices for parent involvement, rather than dictating the parental involvement policies. Included in this article are seven steps state boards of education can take in order to produce and implement policy on parent involvement. Action taken should promote a comprehensive program for parents, including the development and dissemination of relevant literature and videos, inservice training for administration and policy makers to enable them to guide teachers toward improving the quality and variety of parent participation, and inservice training for teachers in the effective use of parent resources.

Community.

Chavkin and Williams (1989) address the question of community size and parent involvement in education. Working out of the Southwest Educational Department Laboratory, the authors surveyed more than 3000 parents and 4000 educators in seven southwestern states. They used the Parent Involvement Questionnaire (PIQ) mentioned previously in their 1990 study. They distributed these surveys at open house meetings. Communities were divided into three categories: large communities with population greater than 500,000; medium communities with population

from 20,000 to 500,000; and small communities with population fewer than 20,000 people. 3,103 parents responded to the survey with 42.6% from large communities, 21.9% from medium, and 35.5% from small. The ethnic make-up of the respondents was similar to the ethnic population of the southwestern region targeted. The results of the survey show that parents from all three community sizes have similar attitudes about the importance of parent involvement in education. Parents in large-size communities show slightly more interest in their children's progress than parents in the other two communities, and parents in large-size communities have more concerns about childcare and the ability to participate in school activities. This survey has encouraging results regarding parental feelings and their children's education.

Dedmond (1991) outlines a plan for establishing and coordinating school-community partnerships. The premise of developing these partnerships is the desire to support quality learning, to involve many people in the process, to grow through diversity of approach, and to provide a link between communities and schools. The key to success is collaborative planning. The school counselor is recommended as the coordinator of the partnership due to

skills and knowledge in the areas of planning, development, curriculum development, analysis and problem solving, public relations, and career guidance. A nine-point checklist is included for possible program implementation.

An untapped resource in the community that Amundson (1991) advocates are the older volunteers. A strong case for involving the elderly is made; as many as 70% of the voters in a given community are not parents of school-age students. One way to increase support for the school system among the older voters is to get them directly involved in schools. The school districts that have developed programs incorporating older volunteers have found significant benefits for the schools, students, and volunteers. While no specific plan is included, it is stated that planning is the key component to successful implementation. Suggestions on where to find the senior citizens, how to train them, and potential problem areas and how to avoid them are included.

Wilson and Rossman (1986) examine a selection of exemplary secondary schools looking for the methods used to build a collaborative link with the community. The authors have identified programs where the entire community works together on a given plan that is of

interest to all. It is reported that in addition to a successful project outcome, the values and beliefs that result from these projects build an atmosphere of mutual caring and achievement. Schools that are building links to the community use aggressive public relations campaigns, recruit human resources, develop programs of community service for students, use creative promotion techniques, and build an identity that takes on characteristics of the community as a whole. The authors point out that there is no one recipe for success, but accessibility to the community and improving school/community relations are key to the exemplary school's success.

Seeley (1986) suggests that the time has arrived for school reformers to include the community in their efforts to make changes. He includes two different detailed strategies for incorporating the community in the schools: A gradual approach using school volunteers, peer tutoring, cooperative learning, business partnerships, and home visits; A bolder approach that identifies the "learning gap," finding a community wide solution to close the learning gap, make public the desire to have a community partnership, and actively seek financial support for that partnership. Some schools are

not ready to announce that a revolution is occurring in education, so perhaps these schools would want to take gradual steps to change. The author clearly states that his definition of community is not just the parents of students, but the entire community at large.

Justiz and Kameen (1987) outline two high schools that have entered partnerships with businesses in order to assist at-risk and dropout students. They examine questions of business motivation: Is it in businesses best interest to continue to have schools educate the future workforce? What can business do to help alleviate the twenty-five percent rate of failure of ninth graders to graduate from high school? The authors examine the prevention strategies that businesses may want to employ and finances behind those strategies. Included are many examples of business programs that are being developed by leading corporations to change the current trend of untrained and poorly trained high school graduates.

A successful volunteer project out of Washington, D.C. is outlined by Sweet (1988) that involves the placement of professionally employed people in public schools to help teach math and science. The article chronicles the efforts of Theodore Drury, who modeled his project after the VISTA program, and outlines the factors

for successful development and implementation. Another similar project outlined in the same article is the volunteer project launched by the American Association of Retired Persons in 1984 in the same locale. The projects are compared and contrasted in the areas of math and science education.

Summary of literature review findings

Parents, teachers, and school administrators need to be supportive of the movement toward greater parental involvement in secondary education. All of the research shows a positive result when parents become active in their children's schooling. Schools need to abandon their current method of involving parents and enter into a two-way partnership for the enrichment and achievement of all children. Communication is an integral factor in taking the first step toward this partnership. To improve the types of communications in which parents and schools are engaged is to enhance the school environment. The schools, through the process of restructuring, need to invite parents onto and into the school in such a way that parents are a factor in all facets of education. The achievement of children improves, the quality of the school improves, the parents and teachers work toward a common goal, and the children benefit.

This is the antithesis of the vicious circle; it is a spiral of positive result based on the home and school working together.

Statement of the Purpose:

One hundred forty five parents at a high school in Petaluma, CA responded to a survey regarding their involvement with their children's education. The purpose of this study was to determine how parents felt about their school involvement.

Method:

The survey used in this study is entitled "Schools and Families Working Together: A Survey of Parents." This survey was designed at the Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools at The Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, MD. The survey was originally intended to be answered by parents of elementary and middle school students; this researcher modified some questions to be more subject appropriate for the parents of high school students. Questions involving the teaching of reading, spelling, and handwriting were replaced with questions more often found in a typical high school curriculum.

The school has an enrollment of 1,234 students with 1,051 separate families. A survey was sent home to each family through the U. S. mail service. Students brought the surveys to the main office at the school or delivered them to a box in the classroom of the researcher; 145 surveys were returned. All data from the returned surveys was compiled. The parent with the most school contact was instructed to complete the survey. All questions were answered as they related to the oldest child enrolled at the school.

The majority of the respondents, over 72%, were mothers. Fathers responded 24% of the time, and the other 4% were stepparents or guardians. Seventy-two percent of the families had one child in the school with the grade breakdown being almost equal among parents of freshmen, sophomores, and juniors. Parents of seniors were the smallest group of respondents.

It is significant to note that over 80% of the respondents stated that there were two adults living in the home at the time of the survey. Other relevant demographics of the respondents are as follows:

Parent completed high school only	12%
Parent attended college or trade school	41%

Parent completed college	25%
Parent has some post-graduate education	20%
Parent works in home	16%
Parent works part-time	24%
Parent has full-time job	55%
Parent holds more than one job	2%
Parent is a full-time student	2%

Parents' Attitudes about Parent Involvement

The first question asked how parents felt about the school at the time of the survey. They were given thirteen statements and asked to rate each one as follows:

YES meant they agreed strongly with the statement

yes meant they agreed a little with the statement

no meant they disagreed a little with the statement

NO meant they disagreed strongly with the statement

A response of "YES" was assigned 4 points, "yes" was assigned 3 points, "no" was assigned 2 points, and "NO" was assigned 1 point. A higher average score meant that the parents had more positive feelings about the school and being involved in their children's education.

Parents were asked whether this is a very good school (mean score = 3.18); whether teachers care about children (mean score = 3.13); and whether parents feel

welcome at the school (mean score = 3.37). Other responses that could be interpreted as positive are that parents feel that they are able to help their children with their English studies (mean score = 3.25), children like to talk about school at home (mean score = 3.05), and that this school is a good place for students and parents (mean score = 3.04).

Statements with responses leaning toward the negative cannot necessarily be construed as negative answers. Parents were asked about the school having a different goal for their student than their own; the mean score of 2.20 indicates that parents and school are more aligned with goals for students than not. Parents responded that they feel they are not as able to help in math as they are in English (mean score = 2.46) and that students should not get more homework. The statement reads "My child should get more homework." The mean score: 2.55. Parents feel that this school's teachers give ample homework.

What Subjects Do Families Want to Know More About?

Some parents want information on all subjects that their children study in school. Fifty percent of the responding parents would like more information on how to help their children in math and 39% would like to help

their children with their study skills. Three other areas that received support from parents were helping students cope with problems, improving writing skills, and developing science skills. Areas that received fewer than a 20% response were in foreign language, social studies, speaking skills, and reading. Suggestions from respondents in the "other" category included computer education, music appreciation, health related areas such as CPR, first aid, and AIDS prevention, and driver's training.

Teachers at this school should be encouraged to design several alternatives to provide regular and useful information about what children learn in mathematics at all grade levels. An agreement on what study skills to emphasize at home and school is of special interest to the parents of these students. Parents benefit from clear information on how to monitor progress in each subject area and how they may help them at home.

How are Parents Most Involved with Their Children?

Parents were asked to tell how often they conducted 18 different types of involvement with the oldest child at the school.

The 18 areas were broken down into different response categories as follows:

NEVER DO meant they do not do this

NOT YET meant they have not done it yet this year

1-2 TIMES meant they have done once or a few times

MANY TIMES meant they have done it many times

The responses were figured on a strict percentage; the total number of responses for each category was divided by the total number of responses for each statement. The statements have been ranked from the top response of involvement to the least involvement.

Most parents are involved in: (responding MANY TIMES)

1) talking to the child about school work 96%
2) assigning chores to do for the family 82%
3) talking about environmental or political issues 81%
4) checking to see homework is completed 65%
5) talking to student about a television show 59%
6) attending special events at school 56%
7) listening to a story/essay the child wrote 56%

Parents responded most often 1 - 2 TIMES to:

1) visiting the classroom 58%
2) practicing skills before a test 47%
3) talking to teacher at school 49%
4) helping design or build projects 38%

Areas receiving more than half of the responses

either being NOT YET or NEVER DO:

1) playing games to teach concepts 53%

2) talking to teacher on the phone 53%

3) go to Booster Club meetings 78%

Many parents are presently involved in several aspects of their children's education, especially if one combines the MANY TIMES and 1 - 2 TIMES response columns. The school could build on parent's strengths and increase involvement by examining the responses to this question and designing activities to correct weaknesses. The school may want to work toward helping all of their families to become knowledgeable partners in activities happening on and off campus.

How Much Does the School Involve Parents Now?

Parents reported whether the school conducted nine different activities to involve them at school or at home in their children's education. They responded with one of three different choices about how the school does each activity:

DOES NOT DO (DND)	the school does not do this
COULD DO BETTER (CDB)	the school does this, but could do it better
DOES WELL (DW)	the school does this well now

For each of the nine areas, the breakdowns are given.

Each percentage was figured taking the number of responses in each category and dividing it by the total number of responses to the given question.

	DND	CDB	DW
1) how child is doing in school	13.5%	51.7%	34.8%
2) skills to learn this year	28.2%	52.8%	19.0%
3) how to check homework	69.3%	24.8%	5.8%
4) how to help child at home	56.5%	36.2%	7.2%
5) volunteer for a few hours	41.7%	27.3%	31.0%
6) send home clear notices	9.3%	27.8%	62.9%
7) invite me to school programs	2.8%	27.3%	69.9%
8) parent-teacher conference	37.7%	37.7%	24.6%
9) send home news about things	6.4%	26.4%	67.2%

The news from school to home is an area of strength for this high school. Parents commented that the newsletter did not always arrive in time for them to attend a given event, but overall, they responded positively to that method of communication. The areas showing weakness stem from teacher and parent contact; parents feel the school could do better letting them know what their children will be learning, how the parent can be involved in checking homework or building skills, and having the teacher take time with the parent to confer on the student's progress.

Parents were asked to record their interests in possible workshop offerings from a list of 12 suggestions. Parents at this school were most interested in:

1) helping students with test taking strategies 68%
2) planning/scheduling for colleges/scholarships 63%
3) helping students develop study skills 55%
4) helping my child develop personal talents 53%

Other topics elicited responses, but not to the extent that these four did. Depending on the desired number of attendees, workshops could be offered in some of the other suggested areas. Plans for the workshops should include one or more ways to summarize or share information with parents who are unable to attend. This may be done through newsletters, summary sheets, video recordings of the workshops, or in other ways. Workshops could be brought into the community setting rather than having the parents come to the campus. More than 71% of the responding parents would like to see workshops offered in the evening hours, with 20% afternoon, and 8% preferring the morning hours.

Student Characteristics and Homework Time:

Parents were asked to rate the average number of minutes that their child does homework, the average

number of minutes the parent spends helping with homework, and the amount of time the parent could spend working with the child if the teacher gave ideas or if the child needed help. The responses were grouped into a percentage over 30 minutes of time for each category.

1) amount of time child does homework (30+ minutes) 77%
2) amount of time parent spends helping (30+ minutes) 5%
3) amount of time parent could spend (30+ minutes) 64%
4) weekend time to work with child on projects: YES 96%

Parents were then asked to report on their oldest child's success in school. The choices were top, good, average, fair, and poor student. The percentages were figured by taking the number of responses in each category and dividing them by the total number of responses to the success ranking question.

1) parents of top students responding 35%
2) parents of good students responding 37%
3) parents of average students responding 17%
4) parents of fair students responding 7%
5) parents of poor students responding 4%

Most parents at this school responded that they could spend more time with their child doing homework, but comments made often were twofold: students had passed the parent's ability to help them in many subject

areas; high school is a time for students to learn independence from the parents and the parents should not have to monitor or help the student unless specifically asked. Parents did respond that given input from the school, they could help their student more than they are doing now. Overall, the parents of students at this school were willing to help their children in any manner possible.

Discussion and Implications:

Parents in the school's community generally support the school as a place that cares about their children. Parents were asked to express their own comments, without rankings, about the best thing the school could do to help both the parent and child. A frequent response was a desire for personal contact from the teacher to the parent whenever the student's work habits or grades changed.

Parents felt the school did well to let them know how the student was doing overall with the every six-weeks report card, but the teachers needed to contact the parents when a change occurred in any individual class. Parents requested that teachers contact them not only when the child was doing poorly, but also when a positive change was made.

In order to implement these kinds of changes, school systems will have to make fundamental changes for secondary teachers. It is impossible for a teacher with a student load of 150 or more to contact every parent when a shift occurs in the student. A decrease in the number of students a teacher has during each day will lead teachers and parents into a working relationship commonly found in elementary schools. Teachers will be able to contact the parents in person, by phone, or by letter. If teachers knew the parents of their students better, parents would feel more welcome in their children's classrooms, and thus, become more involved in the school.

Almost 80% of the respondents work full or part time, and probably would have difficulty spending large amounts of time at the school. While the parents did say they felt welcome at the school, most of them are not active at the site. The school needs to find a way to accommodate the needs of the parents during the hours they are available. Many are willing to come to the campus in the evening hours, either to learn how to help their children in troublesome subject areas or to extend their own education.

Many parents wrote comments regarding homework and

their involvement. Parents expressed concern that high school was a time for students to learn responsibility and motivate themselves, not a time for the parent to be involved in the daily work assigned. Angry responses were not uncommon; an attitude that the parents had "put in their time" when the children were in elementary school was prevalent. The school needs to educate these parents regarding the current findings that involvement, especially sustained involvement, in a child's education will yield better individual academic achievement and a better school overall.

The school could begin this education process by having teachers provide specific information about the major academic subjects. Once the parents know what they can expect their child to learn, how it will be taught, and the manner in which they can help their children, the journey to greater parental involvement will be underway.

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Appendix

Dear Parent or Guardian:

I am currently working on my Master's degree in Education at Dominican College. My thesis is entitled "Building Bridges from School to Home: Getting Parents Involved in Secondary Education." I would appreciate any help you can give me by filling out the following questionnaire. I realize my timing is poor; I had no idea the Site Council was also going to be asking you to spend some time answering questions. Thank you in advance for the few minutes it will take to fill out this one.

The questions in this survey were prepared by teachers in eight schools in Baltimore, and modified by me to be more subject appropriate. I hope you are not offended by the reference of "child" throughout the questionnaire; I could not think of another term.

Your answers will be grouped together with those of many other families. No family or student will ever be identified. Of course, you may skip any question, but I hope you will answer all of them. I will share the results with you later this year in the Newsletter.

Please have your child return this questionnaire to room A-20 or the box in the main office TOMORROW or AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. Please return only one questionnaire for the family.

Thank you very much for your support of my project.

This questionnaire should be answered by PARENT or GUARDIAN WHO HAS THE MOST CONTACT with Casa Grande High about the student.

Who is filling in the questionnaire? PLEASE CHECK IF YOU ARE...

_____mother	_____aunt	_____guardian
_____father	_____uncle	_____other relative
_____stepmother	_____grandmother	_____other (describe)
_____stepfather	_____grandfather	_____

HOW MANY CHILDREN from your family go to Casa Grande High School THIS YEAR?

Please CIRCLE how many children at this school...

1 2 3 4 5 or more

What GRADES are they in? CIRCLE ALL of the grades of your children in this school...

9 10 11 12

If you have more than one child at this school, please answer the questions about your OLDEST CHILD at Casa Grande High School.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Q - 1. We would like to know how you feel about this school right NOW. This will help us plan for the future.

Please CIRCLE ONE choice for each statement...

YES means you AGREE STRONGLY with the statement
yes means you AGREE A LITTLE with the statement
no means you DISAGREE A LITTLE with the statement
NO means you DISAGREE STRONGLY with the statement

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THESE...

a. This is a very good school.	YES	yes	no	NO
b. The teachers care about my child.	YES	yes	no	NO
c. I feel welcome at the school.	YES	yes	no	NO
d. My child likes to talk about schol at home.	YES	yes	no	NO
e. My child should get more homework	YES	yes	no	NO
f. Many parents I know help out at school	YES	yes	no	NO
g. The school and I have different goals for my child.	YES	yes	no	NO
h. I feel I can help my child in english.	YES	yes	no	NO
i. I feel I can help my child in math.	YES	yes	no	NO
j. I could help my child more if the teacher gave me more ideas.	YES	yes	no	NO
k. My child is learning as much as he/she can at this school.	YES	yes	no	NO
l. Parents get involved more in the younger grades.	YES	yes	no	NO
m. This school is a good place for stud ents and for parents.	YES	yes	no	NO

Q - 2. Some families want more information about what their children are learning in each subject.

CHECK WHICH SUBJECTS YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT TO HELP YOUR CHILD:

_____math skills	_____speaking skills	_____reading
_____ foreign language	_____study skills	_____writing
_____social studies	_____coping with probl ems	_____science

_____other (please specify)_____

Q - 3. Families get involved in different ways at school or at home. Which of the following have you done this school year with the OLDEST CHILD you have at this school? Please CIRCLE one choice for each.

NEVER DO means you do NOT do this
NOT YET means you have NOT done this yet this year
1 - 2 TIMES means you have done this ONCE or a FEW TIMES this year
MANY TIMES means you have done this MANY TIMES this year

a. Talk to the child about school work.	NEVER DO	NOT YET	1-2 TIMES	MANY TIMES
b. Visit the classroom.	NEVER DO	NOT YET	1-2 TIMES	MANY TIMES
c. Listen to a story / essay the child wrote.	NEVER DO	NOT YET	1-2 TIMES	MANY TIMES
d. Help child with homework.	NEVER DO	NOT YET	1-2 TIMES	MANY TIMES
e. See that child makes up work after absence.	NEVER DO	NOT YET	1-2 TIMES	MANY TIMES
f. Practice skills before a test.	NEVER DO	NOT YET	1-2 TIMES	MANY TIMES
g. Talk to child about a TV show.	NEVER DO	NOT YET	1-2 TIMES	MANY TIMES
h. Play games at home to teach new concepts.	NEVER DO	NOT YET	1-2 TIMES	MANY TIMES
i. Assign chores to do for the famly at home.	NEVER DO	NOT YET	1-2 TIMES	MANY TIMES
j. Talk to the teacher at school.	NEVER DO	NOT YET	1-2 TIMES	MANY TIMES
k. Talk to teacher on phone.	NEVER DO	NOT YET	1-2 TIMES	MANY TIMES
l. Go to Booster meetings.	NEVER DO	NOT YET	1-2 TIMES	MANY TIMES
m. Check to see that child has done homework.	NEVER DO	NOT YET	1-2 TIMES	MANY TIMES
n. Go to special events at school.	NEVER DO	NOT YET	1-2 TIMES	MANY TIMES
o. Take child to library.	NEVER DO	NOT YET	1-2 TIMES	MANY TIMES
p. Talk with child about political or environmental issues.	NEVER DO	NOT YET	1-2 TIMES	MANY TIMES
q. Help build or design school projects.	NEVER DO	NOT YET	1-2 TIMES	MANY TIMES

Q - 4. Schools contact families in different ways. CIRCLE one choice if the school has done these things this year...

DOES NOT DO means the school DOES NOT DO this
COULD DO BETTER means the school DOES this but COULD DO BETTER
DOES WELL means the school DOES this VERY WELL now

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a. Tell me how my child is doing in school.	DOES NOT DO	COULD DO BETTER	DOES WELL
b. Tell me what skills my child needs to learn each year.	DOES NOT DO	COULD DO BETTER	DOES WELL
c. Explain how to check my child's homework.	DOES NOT DO	COULD DO BETTER	DOES WELL
d. Give ideas of how to help my child at home	DOES NOT DO	COULD DO BETTER	DOES WELL
e. Ask me to volunteer for a few hours at school.	DOES NOT DO	COULD DO BETTER	DOES WELL
f. Send home clear notices that can be read.	DOES NOT DO	COULD DO BETTER	DOES WELL
g. Invite me to programs at the school.	DOES NOT DO	COULD DO BETTER	DOES WELL
h. Have a parent-teacher conference with me.	DOES NOT DO	COULD DO BETTER	DOES WELL
i. Send home news about things.	DOES NOT DO	COULD DO BETTER	DOES WELL

Q - 5. Some families have asked for WORKSHOPS on topics they want to hear more about. CHECK THE ONES that interest you... or suggest a few...

_____How children grow and develop at this age.
_____How to discipline and control children of different ages.

_____Solving school problems and preventing dropping out.
_____Preventing teen-age health problems.

_____How to deal with stress.
_____Adult education--Programs for going back to school.

_____Success as a single parent.
_____Family life and school achievement.

_____How to help my child develop his/her talents.
_____Planning/scheduling for colleges and scholarships.

_____Helping students with test taking strategies.
_____Helping students develop study skills.

Any others you would like?_____
_____

Q - 6. The last questions will help us plan new programs to meet your family's needs.

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a. About how much times does your child spend doing homework on most school days?

MINUTES MY CHILD DOES HOMEWORK on most school days... (CIRCLE ONE)

0 10 - 20 20 - 30 30 - 40 45 - 60 1 - 1.5 hours 1.5 - 2 hours

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b. How much time do you spend helping your child on an average night?

MINUTES OF MY TIME: 0 10 - 20 20 - 30 30 - 45 45 - 60 60+

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c. How much time COULD YOU SPEND working with your child if the teacher showed you what to do?

MINUTES I COULD SPEND: 0 10 - 20 20 - 30 30 - 45 45 - 60 60+

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d. Do you have time on weekends to work with your child on projects or homework for school? _____Yes _____No

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e. How is the oldest child you have at this school doing in school work?

MY OLDEST CHILD (or ONLY CHILD) at this school is... (CHECK ONE)

_____one of the TOP students
_____GOOD student
_____ok, AVERAGE student
_____FAIR student
_____POOR student

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f. WHEN do you like (or would prefer) to attend conferences, meetings, or workshops at the school?

_____morning _____afternoon _____evening

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g. How many adults live at home? _____adults How many children live at home? _____children

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h. What is your education? CHECK ONE...

_____did not complete high school
_____completed high school
_____some college or trade school
_____completed college
_____post graduate

i. Do you work at home or outside the home? CHECK ONE...

_____work at home _____full-time job
_____part-time job _____more than one job

WE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE YOUR IDEAS...

What is the best thing the school could do to help you with your child?

Any other ideas or suggestions?

PLEASE HAVE YOUR CHILD RETURN THIS QUESTIONNAIRE TO ROOM A-20 OR TO THE BOX IN THE MAIN OFFICE TOMORROW OR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME AND SUPPORT!